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A Community Firewise Workshop at Slana

On April 16th Slana Ranger Station and Wrangell-St. Elias NP/P staff, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and AK NPS Fire Management presented the first community Firewise workshop to 13 Slana residents. Slana is a small community adjacent to the northwest corner of Wrangell-St. Elias. After a complimentary breakfast provided by Slana staff, Vicki Penwell, Slana District Interpretive Ranger, welcomed the participants and spoke about the significance of the workshop, especially in light of 2004, Alaska's largest fire season. James Savage, Eastern Area Fire Management Forestry Technician taught the group about the role of wildland fire, fire management in Alaska and the local fire history. Morgan Miller, Regional Fire Communication and Education Specialist, talked about effective Firewise strategies that if implemented around the home, will reduce the risk of wildland fire. Following a super



Vicki Penwell welcomes Slana residents to the Firewise workshop. NPS Photo



Gary Mullen talks to the group about home assessments. NPS Photo

burrito lunch sponsored by the Slana Parent Teacher Organization, Pete Dalton, Wrangell-St. Elias Park Ranger, handed out copies of fuel reduction, Firewise special use permits and described that the permit authorizes work on public land within 100ft of private landowner structures that could become endangered in the event of a wildland fire. Gary Mullen, AK DNR, DOF Copper Center Area Fire Management Officer spoke about home assessment evaluations the fire suppression agency provides to the community. The workshop wrapped up with an

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interactive home assessment led by Gary Mullen and based on the Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group home assessment form. The evaluation took place at the Freed property on the Nabesna Road. This property, including structures was bequeathed to the NPS by a local resident. At the conclusion of the workshop all who participated agreed that they gained knowledge to understand and become Firewise. This accomplishment could not have been achieved without the terrific support from Wrangell-St. Elias, in particular the Slana Ranger Station staff. Thanks to the staff for the work and time they devoted to making the Firewise workshop a success.

This new, interactive Firewise workshop is designed for local communities adjacent to or within NPS units. Firewise is a multi-agency effort designed to involve homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, and others in the effort to protect people and property from the risk of wildland fire – before a fire starts. The Firewise concept emphasizes individual responsibility for safer home construction and design, landscaping and maintenance.

Slana is the first of four community Firewise workshops that Alaska NPS Fire Management and fire interagency partners will present this season. Talkeetna and the Murie Science and Learning Center, a centralized location for residents from Clear, Anderson, Healy, McKinley Village and Cantwell to attend, will host workshops in April and McCarthy will host a workshop in late July.

For more information about Wrangell-St. Elias fuel reduction, Firewise special use permits, please contact Pete Dalton at (907) 822-7232 or Pete_Dalton@nps.gov.

For more information about the community Firewise workshops, please contact Morgan Miller at (907) 683-6423 or Morgan_Miller@nps.gov.